

TARRANT

The Alberta Recording and Research Network
Tracking Influenza in Alberta



NEWSLETTER July 2005

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End of the influenza season

The 2005 season appears to have finished, and overall the epidemic this year was minor. Influenza activity has slowly declined since early March. The provincial Lab confirmed 963 influenza cases in Alberta up to May 7, 2005: 827 Influenza A viruses and 136 Influenza B viruses. Most of the early cases were *Type A/Fujian/411/2002/ (H3N2)*. Influenza B has been the predominant virus in circulation during the past two months. The National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) has characterized 15 influenza B viruses sent from Alberta, all of them as *Type B/Shanghai/361/02-like*.

Part of the reason why the epidemic was mild may be that many susceptibles who would have passed on the virus were immune, either from last year's epidemic or the immunization.

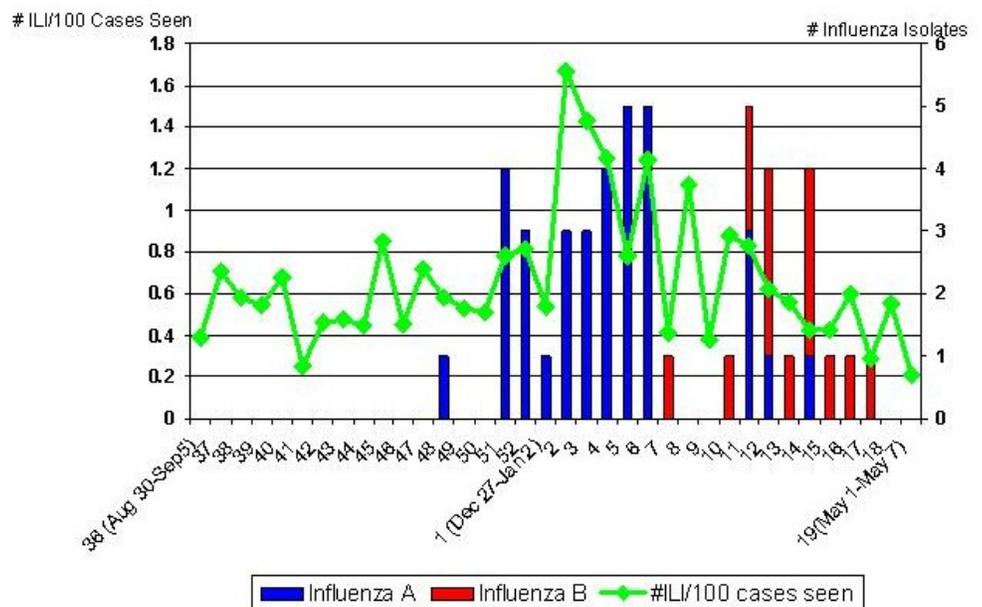
Although influenza activity typically peaks during the winter months, influenza viruses can circulate year-round. The emergence of a novel influenza strain capable of causing a pandemic is also a possibility. Year-round surveillance will improve public health's ability to rapidly identify new strains of the virus in Alberta. Please continue clinical influenza reporting and swab submission during the summer!

Forty-eight lab-confirmed cases were reported by TARRANT recorders, with 14 cases of Influenza B and 34 cases of Influenza A. Two cases of Influenza A submitted by TARRANT sentinels were sent to the National Lab for subtyping early this year. Both of them were *Type A/Fujian/411/2002/ (H3N2)*.

Both of these subtypes matched those in the immunization, which contained antigens equivalent to those of

- A/New Caledonia/20/99 (N1H1)-like,
- A/Fujian411/2002 (H3N2)-like, and
- B/Shanghai/361/2002-like virus.

**Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Influenza Isolates
TARRANT August 2004- May 2005**



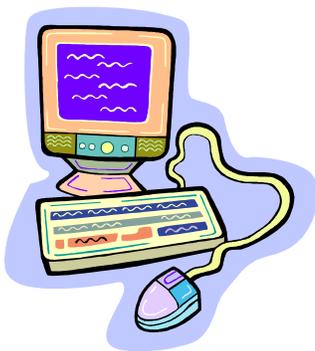
Avian Influenza Update

Since January 2004, 97 cases of H5N1 avian influenza and 53 deaths have been reported in Viet Nam, Thailand and Cambodia. Viet Nam, with 76 cases and 37 deaths, has been the most severely affected country, followed by Thailand, with 17 cases and 12 deaths, and Cambodia, with 4 cases and 4 deaths. The most recent case was reported to the Ministry on 17 April.

On 19 May 2005, the WHO provided updated cumulative numbers of human cases of H5N1 avian influenza broken down by phase in the outbreak, which began in December 2003. For more updated information on avian influenza, please visit the WHO website with avian flu update:

http://www.who.int/csr/don/2005_05_19/en/index.html

Automatic Data Submission



Sentinels in our program send weekly reports of Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Lower Respiratory Tract Infection (LRTI) cases. This used to be a manual process, but now with Electronic Medical Records (EMR), information can be sent by e-mail automatically. If your practice has an EMR system and you want to know more about sending data automatically, please contact Pin Cai @ (403) 210-9258 (phone) or pcai@ucalgary.ca (email).

New Sentinel Recruitment

We have been trying to contact our current sentinel physicians since early March, particularly the ones who had not sent reports in the past few months. A few physicians cannot continue to participate in the program because

their practice patterns have changed and they do not see many patients with acute symptoms such as influenza like illness.

Before the next flu season starts, we need to recruit more sentinel physicians across Alberta. If you know someone that might be willing to be a sentinel clinician, please contact us at the Department of Family Medicine, University of Calgary: website www.ucalgary.ca/tarrant

Virtual Tour of the Provincial Lab

What happens to those samples when they get to the lab? Microbiology is a constantly changing science, as new methods are developed. We are lucky to have a top-notch virologist in Kevin Fonseca, who has such an interest in community disease as well as in developing new rapid tests for viruses.

He and his team are constantly developing better methods, so for us old-timers who do not really understand the new virology, the Tarrant staff went around the laboratory to understand what is going on. Their production is on our website, at:

- Under "What's New" section: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/tarrant/whatsnew.html> and/or
- Under "Participate" section: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/tarrant/participate.html>

